Community Relations Plan

Ross Complex Superfund Site

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Bonneville
POWER ADMINISTRATION

Ross Complex Superfund Site Community Relations Plan

This community relations plan identifies the issues of community concern regarding the Ross Complex Superfund site in Vancouver, Washington. It outlines community relations activities to be conducted during the Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study (RI/FS).

In general, the community is interested in the site, but has only sketchy information about the pollution problems there. The start of the RI/FS is likely to raise community interest. This plan is intended to assure that all who want to know about the site have access to information. It is also designed to enable interested community members to provide advice on the study and cleanup actions.

BPA's Ross Complex was placed on the National Priorities List (NPL) of hazardous waste sites in the fall of 1989. BPA owns the site and is responsible for conducting the studies and cleaning it up. BPA will cooperate with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Washington Department of Ecology (WDOE) in the project.

BPA is committed to public involvement as a way to help assure better decisions in this cleanup process. This plan is also part of the legal requirements for sites placed on the NPL.

The community relations actions described here are based in part on interviews with 19 community leaders in Clark County, Washington, in January and February, 1990. Individuals from the Clark County Environmental Council, Clark County,

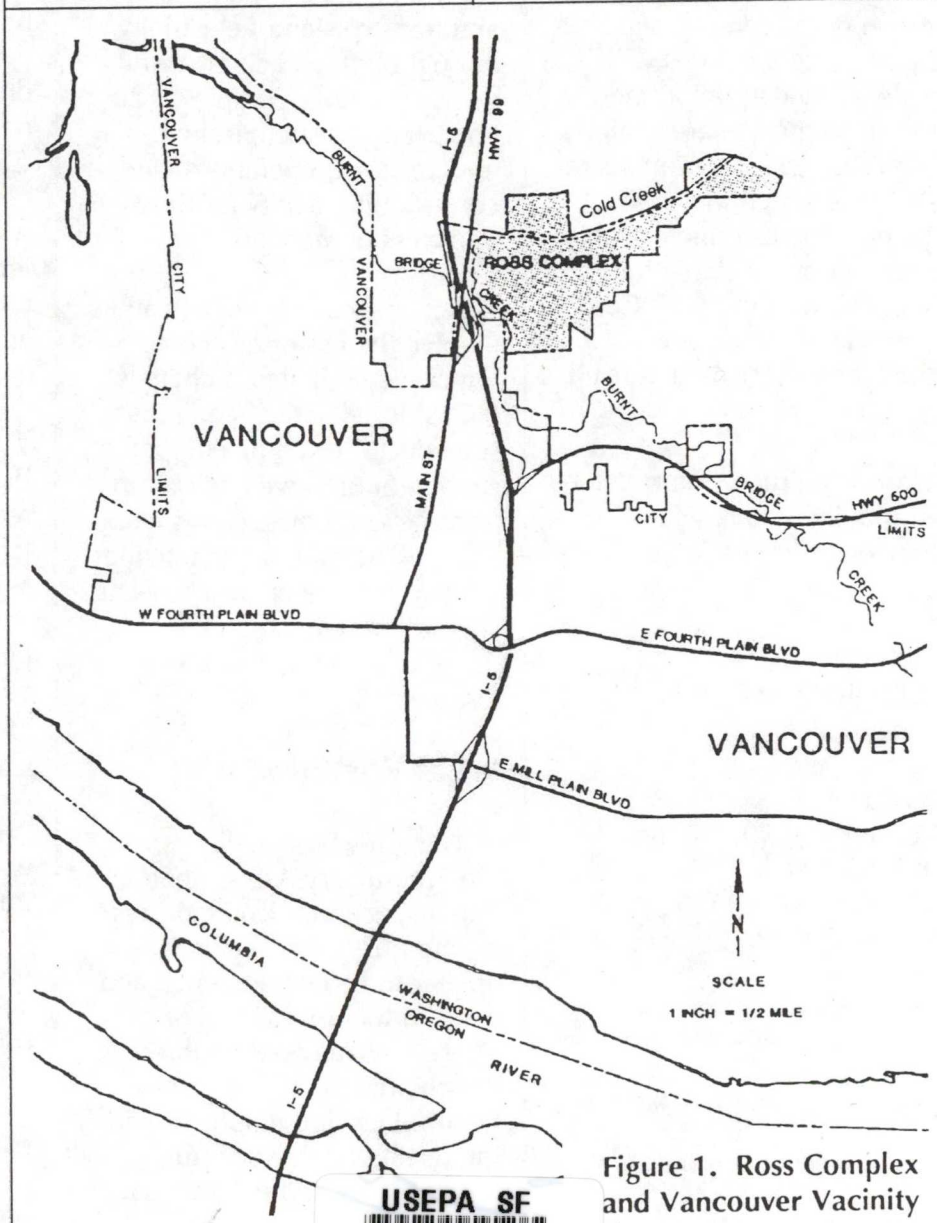


Figure 1. Ross Complex and Vancouver Vacinity

City of Vancouver, Clark County Neighborhood Association, Chamber of Commerce, Vancouver School District, Intergovernmental Resource Center, and others advised us on how to best involve the community. Their ideas are incorporated this plan.

The community can get involved in the process of cleaning up the Ross Complex by reviewing available information, attending workshops and meetings, submitting proposals or ideas to BPA, and sharing your views during comment periods. Fact sheets, mailed to interested community residents, businesses and government entities will provide up-to-date information. Briefings on the site are available on request. An Administrative Record which includes all of the documents critical to this project will be available for public review at the Ross Complex and at the Vancouver Public Library at 1007 East Mill Plain Boulevard.

If you want more information or would like to talk with someone about this project, please call or write:

Mr. John Straub,
Ross Facility Manager
Bonneville Power
Administration
P. O. Box 491
5411 NE Hwy. 99, Dittmer
Control Center
Vancouver, WA 98666
(206) 690-2070

Introduction

The Site

The Ross Complex is located in the northernmost part of the City of Vancouver, east of U.S. Highway 99 and north of State Highway 500. BPA has owned and operated the Ross Complex since 1939. Activities at the site include an electrical substation, warehouse, storage and transportation facilities, maintenance shops, laboratories, office facilities, and the Dittmer Control Center. Dittmer is the control center for the generation and transmission of electricity throughout the Pacific Northwest. The Ross Complex is an important research, testing, maintenance, operations, and construction facility for BPA's transmission network.

Activities at the Ross Complex involve the use of oils containing polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) for electrical equipment, solvents for cleaning equipment, storage of preserved wood transmission poles, paints, etc. Testing and laboratory activities include the use of heavy metals, such as mercury and other organic and inorganic compounds.

What We Know

Two previous study phases, the Preliminary Assessment and Site Inspection, identified sites on the Ross Complex that appear to be contaminated and need further investigation. These sites may pose a threat to the environment or to public health. Detailed reports providing results of previous studies are available at the Ross Complex and at the Clark County Regional Library.

1. Groundwater samples from test wells at the complex indicated the presence of degreasing solvents - 1,1,1-Trichloroethane (TCA), 1,1-Dichloroethylene (DCE) and/or chloroform in the Troutdale aquifier in the western portion of the complex and in perched-water zone near Cold Creek. Some of the samples exceed drinking water standards.

2. The Fog Chamber Dump was the most severely contaminated site found during the Site Inspection. Five test samples indicated 14 different contaminants in the soil. The Fog Chamber Dump is the only confirmed area at the complex where spent capacitors containing PCB's have been disposed of. This pit was in use from approximately 1956 to 1965.

3. Former septic drainlines/ drainfields of the District Office Buildings 1 and 2 may have received chemical wastes from laboratory activities.

4. Limited surface soil contamination by PCBs was also found near the Capacitor Testing Laboratory, Ross Substation, and Capacitor Yards.

5. The Top Coat Test Area was the site of Pentachlorophenol (PCP) testing of wood poles. Drums of spent transformer oils and chemical wastes were stored here. Testing indicates no contamination in this area.

6. Soil samples taken at the eastern Wood Pole Storage Area revealed wood preservatives present at the surface of the site.

Contamination with solvents, heavy metals and other pollutants is suspected but has not yet been found in the Cold Creek Fill Area.

EPA performed a Hazard Ranking of the Ross Site based on information from the Preliminary Assessment and the Site Inspection. Because of its proximity to a large population center and the possible groundwater pollution, the ranking was high enough to include Ross on the National Priorities List. On November 17, 1989, EPA listed the Ross Complex on the National Priorities List for Federal Facility Sites under Superfund. As a NPL site, BPA will be required to follow a specific cleanup process. BPA will pay all of the study and cleanup costs.

What's Next?

The next stage, the Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study (RI/FS), is really two studies conducted at the same time. The Remedial Investigation will further define the type and extent of contamination, and establish criteria for cleaning up the site. The Feasibility Study will identify alternative clean up measures, technologies and costs. The combined study, which will lead to the selection of cleanup measures, will be completed in the fall of 1992. Dames & Moore, a Seattle firm, will be conducting the RI/FS for BPA, with oversight from EPA and WDOE. While the studies are underway, the sites with straightforward cleanup procedures will be cleaned up.

Community Relations Highlights

This community relations program is designed to enable the community to learn about and participate in the Superfund cleanup process. We want to do this in a way that maintains the community's confidence that the site will be cleaned up in a timely fashion with no new or immediate hazards. To be effective, the program must respond to the community's need for information and its interest in participating in the cleanup. Ideally, these steps will lead to a consensus about the cleanup actions to be taken at the site.

Community interviews done in preparation for this plan uncovered some important themes.

- Other than local government officials who deal regularly with water issues, few people knew much about this site.
- Several people felt that community concerns would rise when information is disseminated more widely.
- A number of community leaders expressed interest in the project and could help inform community networks.
- We were consistently urged to provide information often and in a timely, concise and readable form.
- Several local organization's newsletters were suggested as good communications vehicles.
- Local Officials urged us to clean up as soon as possible and avoid unproductive processes and research.

Based on what we heard from the community, we plan to use the following general approaches:

(1) Enlist the support of local community leaders to coordinate community relations activities.

- Ask key community and government organizations to assign a representative to a technical review group. The technical review group members will review procedures and documents, give technical input and serve as a regular communication contact between the community organizations and the project.
- Meet with key individuals and community groups and provide periodic briefings on project progress.

(2) Provide information on the results of sampling, test results and possible cleanup alternatives, and educate the community about the policies, procedures and timing of the Superfund process.

- Provide briefings early in the project for key elected officials and other groups.
- Develop a mailing list in collaboration with community groups and through individual contacts.
- Prepare fact sheets to explain site activities and study results.

- Send fact sheets to all persons who request them, and all persons that BPA, EPA, and WDOE believe to be interested parties.
- Send fact sheets to community organizations for inclusion in their newsletters.
- Conduct informal informational workshops upon request at key times during the project.
- Prepare media releases and briefings on the project.
- Announce public meetings with BPA-paid media announcements and through the mailing list.
- Provide staff to present site information to interested parties on request.

(3) Use public comments to develop reports and make decisions.

- Conduct formal and informal public comment meetings to elicit community response to the Remedial Investigation, Feasibility Study.
- Advise the community that a Technical Assistance Grant is available through the EPA. The grant allows qualified community groups to hire their own technical experts so that they can better interpret and understand site-related documents and other activities that contribute to the decision making process.
- Place all formal comments in the administrative record and make them available for public review at the Ross Complex and the Vancouver Public Library.
- Provide opportunities for formal and informal comment on documents and plans, including meetings with citizens or groups when requested or needed.
- Hold public meetings to discuss results of studies and cleanup choices.

Communty Relations Activities and Schedule

Specific community relations activities are listed below. This schedule may be changed to reflect unanticipated changes in the study and cleanup schedule.

During Work Plan, Spring 1990

- Conduct community interviews
- Telephone contacts with officials/citizens
- Establish mailing list
- Provide fact sheets and briefings to community, BPA employees and media
- Designate agency spokesperson
- Establish Technical Review Group
- Establish public Administrative Record and information repository.
- Inform interested parties of availability of RI?FA Work Plan. Work Plan will be contained in the Administrative Record.

During Remedial Investigation, Fall 1991

- Update mailing lists
- Conduct briefings and workshops
- Add site-related information to the Administrative Record
- Keep public and BPA employees informed of project developments as they occur through meetings, press releases and fact sheets

During Feasibility Study, Spring 1992

- Maintain contact with community and BPA employees
- Respond to media inquiries
- Provide community with information concerning development and screening of alternatives
- Obtain feedback on community interests and concern associated with alternatives
- Hold workshop to review cleanup options and technologies
- Hold briefings for local officials and concerned citizens on alternatives
- Add information to Administrative Record
- Provide information on cleanup actions during study

Review Proposed Plan, Summer 1992

- Notify public of availability of Proposed Plan
- Make Proposed Plan and RI/FS available in Administrative Record
- Develop and distribute Proposed Plan fact sheets
- Publish display advertisement with public involvement information
- Conduct minimum 30-day public comment period including comment meetings
- Consider written and oral comments
- Distribute responsiveness summary to public
- Add information to Administrative Record

Record of Decision (ROD), Fall 1992

- Notify public of availability of ROD
- Brief key community leaders on ROD
- Prepare notice for Federal Register
- Make ROD available to public
- Explain any significant changes in ROD if necessary (changes from proposed cleanup alternatives)
- Conduct public comment period on significant differences if necessary
- Revise and update Community Relations Plan for Remedial Design and Remedial Action steps of the project
- Conduct community interviews (as needed)
- Maintain community dialogue
- Update mailing list
- Add information to Administrative Record

Remedial Design, 1993

- Notify public of Remedial Design report
- Develop and distribute fact sheets
- Conduct information meetings to review activities
- Maintain telephone contacts
- Add information to Administrative Record

Cleanup Stage, 1993

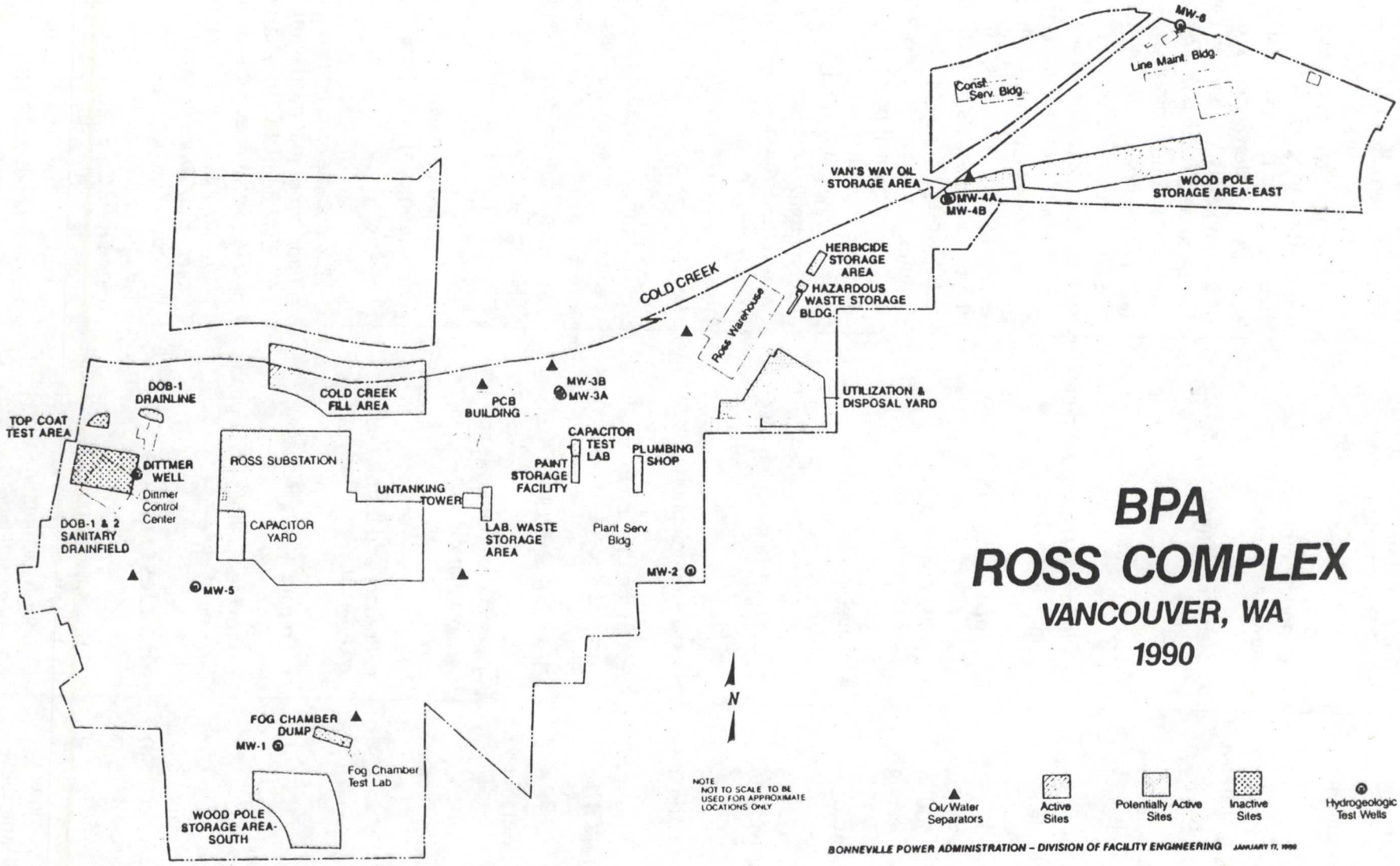
- Notify local officials and residents that cleanup is beginning
- Prepare and distribute fact sheet
- Prepare Media Release
- Provide briefings and updates as needed

Site Description

The Ross Complex is located in the City of Vancouver, Clark County, Washington, at 5411 NE Hwy 99 (Figure 1). The site covers approximately 200 natural and landscaped rolling acres on a terrace between two small streams. These streams, Burnt Bridge Creek and Cold Creek, form topographic boundaries on the north and southwest portions of the site. The Complex is located in what has become a residential area. New home construction has taken place immediately north of Cold Creek and along the southeastern boundary of the site. An older residential neighborhood lies south and southeast of the site. Northwest of the site is a business district, and to the west is a lightly populated business and residential district. Ross Street, which passes through the complex, provides access to neighborhoods between Highway 99 and St. James Rd. Site boundaries and the location of facilities within the complex are shown on Figure 2.

Three major population centers are close to the Ross Complex. The City of Vancouver and the community of Minnehaha has a population of 44,450. The community of Hazel Dell, more than 1 mile north of the complex has a population of approximately 15,550.

The complex sits on layers of silt and sand, that overlay the Troutdale aquifer. These layers of sediments impede the downward flow of rain and irrigation water, and favor the formation of locally perched water zones. Two perched water zones were found near Cold Creek, another near the northeastern part of the complex. The Troutdale aquifer lies at a depth of 130 to 170 feet below the surface.



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Surface water runoff from facilities on the complex is channeled through oil/water separators before exiting the site.

The complex receives its water supply from the City of Vancouver. This water supply consists totally of groundwater from approximately 32 wells. Two municipal water wells lie within a mile of the Ross Complex -- Well Station #3 to the Southwest, and Well Station #1 to the South.

Community Profile

Vancouver is the third largest city within the Portland metropolitan area, which has a combined population of approximately 1.4 million. Vancouver and Clark County are particularly attractive to commuters who work in Oregon — in 1980 nearly 28 percent of Clark County's total workforce commuted to Oregon.

Vancouver was incorporated as a city in 1857, but it began with the establishment of the Hudson's Bay trading post in 1825. This eventually became Ft. Vancouver which was the first military post in the Pacific Northwest.

Population in Clark County grew from about 50,000 in 1940 to approximately 220,400 in 1989. Vancouver has shown similar growth -- from just under 19,000 in 1940 to 44,450 in 1989. Growth from 1986 through 1989 has exceeded 2 percent per year, and population forecasters seem to agree similar growth will continue for the indefinite future.

Vancouver's rapid development is partly linked to its diverse economic conditions. Long known for its pulp and paper industries, it now attracts "high tech" industries as well, with Tektronix, Hewlett-Packard, and SEH America listed among its top 10 employers. Major employers also include the international headquarters for NERCO Minerals and NERCO Oil and Gas, ALCOA, Boise Cascade, Crown Zellerbach, Weyerhaeuser, Vancouver and Evergreen School Districts, Southwest Washington Hospitals, Clark County, Farmer's Insurance Group, and Fred Meyer variety stores. BPA, with 900 employees is among the ten largest employers in Clark County.

Trends from 1980 to 1988 show major growth in machinery, electrical equipment, construction, wholesale and retail trade, and services. Metal products, lumber and wood, food, textiles, and pulp and paper have experienced only modest growth or reductions in total employment during the same time.

When BPA first acquired Ross in December of 1938, land uses immediately surrounding the site were rural. Since that time the city and urban uses have expanded near Ross. The City of Vancouver recently annexed the land adjacent to Ross on the east, south and west. Ross is within the city limits.

Community Involvement at Ross

Since information was first made public about the Ross Complex in 1984, the community has greeted it with interest, but not alarm. BPA has been seen as proactive in sharing findings about the site as they are known. Since 1984, only two people have contacted us with concerns. During our community interviews in 1989, most parties expressed a desire to be kept informed as new developments occur. The major issue will most likely center on the potential effects of solvents found at Ross on the nearby City of Vancouver Water Station #3.

BPA first discussed potential hazardous waste problems at Ross in September, 1984, with officials from the State of Washington Department of Ecology in Olympia. They appreciated BPA's candor, and indicated that they knew about potential problems at Ross, but that the facility was not a priority to them. An article about the Ross Facility and the possible hazardous waste associated with the chemical laboratory at DOB-1 appeared at the time in the Vancouver Columbian. No public inquiries to BPA were prompted by the article.

In July 1986, BPA met with representatives of the Clark Public Utilities, City of Vancouver, Intergovernmental Resource Center, Southwest Washington Health District, and a Clark County Commissioner to discuss the findings of the Preliminary Assessment just finished at Ross. The group was interested and appreciative that we were sharing information and planning to keep them informed. They said that they wanted to be kept informed of our progress. A press briefing was held later that day, and resulted in an

article in the Vancouver Columbian concerning the findings in the Preliminary Assessment Study, and the next step for investigating the site. BPA received no inquiries from the public about the study.

In May 1987, shortly after the contractor began working on the Site Inspection at Ross, BPA received a call from a local resident who was curious about the drilling going on at Ross, and wanted to know what we were finding. Her husband had dug a shallow well on their property for irrigation, and was concerned about the water quality. BPA met with them to discuss what had been found to date, and what the contractor was doing.

BPA met with them again in October 1988 at the completion of the SI to discuss the findings. We suggested that they have their well tested for the same chemicals that were found at Ross. They indicated that since they currently don't use the well for drinking water, they would wait for the results of BPA's study. She referred BPA to another resident who had a drinking water well nearby. When BPA contacted the resident, she said she had been drinking the water for more than 50 years, and at her age didn't have any problems. Both wells were later tested by the State and no hazardous chemicals were found.

Also in October of 1988, BPA met again with the local officials who had been previously contacted in 1986. All were interested in the results of the SI, and wanted us to continue to keep them informed. Clark Public Utility showed some concern over the timing of our findings, since they were just releasing "pristine" groundwater quality information to their customers. They were concerned that BPA's information release could detract from their findings. All parties were appreciative of being informed so that they could better answer questions from the public. The media was briefed later in the day and both the Oregonian and the Columbian published articles detailing the results of the SI Study.

After the Columbian article ran, BPA received an inquiry from one resident of Hazel Dell, who was concerned about hazardous chemicals from the Ross wells in her drinking water. BPA responded by letter with information about Ross well test results and an assurance that the wells were not part of the City water supply.

During 1988 and 1989, several articles appeared in the Columbian and the Oregonian concerning the water quality in the City of Vancouver drinking water wells. BPA received no inquiries relevant to Ross as a result of these articles.

In July, 1989 the Oregonian interviewed some residents living near the Ross Complex to hear their views about the pollutants found in the groundwater and the plan for cleaning it up. Some said they thought BPA should have let them know about it. Some had not been aware of the problem, but were interested and concerned. One was aware but not concerned.

In October 1989, BPA informed the City of Vancouver and other officials that Dames and Moore had been hired to conduct the Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study. The media was then notified. The Oregonian published an article about the RI/FS study, while the Columbian did not. No public inquiries were received by BPA about the RI/FS.

The Oregonian published an article in November 1989, noting that EPA added Ross to the National Priority List. BPA received no public inquiries.

You may also contact BPA's Public Involvement office in Portland. Telephone numbers, voice/TTY, for the Public Involvement office are: (503) 230-3478 in Portland; toll free (800) 452-8429 for Oregon outside of Portland; (800) 547-6048 for Washington, Idaho, Montana, Utah, Nevada, Wyoming, and California. You may also send comments to Public Involvement Manager, Bonneville Power Administration, Post Office Box 12999, Portland, Oregon 97212

I am interested in following the progress of analysis and clean-up of hazardous waste at the Ross Complex. Please place my name and address on the mailing list.

Name _____

Organization _____

Address _____

City _____ State ____ Zip _____

Phone (_____) _____

May 1990
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